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Semiotics and Classical Studies by Nancy Felson Rubin

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Nancy Felson Rubin, ed., *Semiotics and Classical Studies*. Special Issue of *Arethusa*, 16: 1 and 2 (Spring and Fall, 1983). 277 pp.

This special issue is the fruit of a University of Georgia colloquium on "Classics and Semiotics" at which members of the second International Summer Institute for Semiotics and Structural Studies were invited to respond to eight papers by classicists on semiotics-oriented topics. Thus, it represents a kind of breakthrough, indicating a new receptivity on the part of North American classical philology to developments in the adjacent discipline of semiotics. Nevertheless, the editor, in her introduction to the volume, insists that the benefits do not only flow in one direction: if classics can learn from semiotics, semiotics can, by the same token, absorb from classics a rich tradition of reflection on and practice of signification. But the main potential audience for these papers is clearly classicists rather than semioticians, a fact implicitly acknowledged in Rubin's inclusion of a basic glossary of semiotic terms. As for the papers themselves: John Peradotto ("Texts and Unrefracted Facts: Philology, Hermeneutics and Semiotics") examines the epistemological foundations of his own discipline, American classical philology; Gregory Nagy ("Sêma and Nôësis: Some Illustrations") undertakes to reconstruct aspects of the implicit semiotics of pre-classical Greece through a study of that culture's semiotic terminology; Ann L. T. Bergren ("Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought") and Marilyn B. Arthur ("The Dream of a World Without Women: Poetics and the Circles of Order in the *Theogony* Prooemium") study ideological aspects of the poetic representation of sign production, Bergren focusing on male authors' representations of duplicitous female speech, Arthur on the displacement of women from dominant positions in Hesiod's *Theogony* (as in Greek culture at large); Nancy Felson Rubin and William Merritt Sale ("Meleager and Odysseus: A Structural and Cultural Study of the Greek Hunting-Maturation Myth") perform a narrative analysis of one type of myth, based on two of its examples; Charles Segal ("Greek Myth as a Semiotic and Structural System and the Problem of Tragedy") explores the interaction between text and "megatext" (the synchronic system of Greek myth) in Greek tragedy and other works; Bruce Rosenstock ("Rereading the *Republic*") attempts a radical redefinition of Plato's notion of mimesis; and Bernard Frischer ("A Socio-Psychological and Semiotic Analysis of Epicurus' Portrait") reconstructs the pragmatics of Epicurus' portrait statue and relates it to his therapeutic philosophy. Each pair of papers is followed by a discussion of the papers from the perspective of semiotics; the discussants are Michael Herzfeld (on Peradotto and Nagy), Mieke Bal (on Bergren and Arthur), Glenn W. Most (on Rubin/Sale and Segal), and David Saven (on Rosenstock and Frischer).

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Tzvetan Todorov, ed., *French Literary Theory Today: A Reader*. Trans. R. Carter. Cambridge/Paris: Cambridge UP/Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1982. 239 pp.

Todorov, who as long ago as 1965 undertook to introduce Russian Formalist literary theory to French critics, here continues to play the role of mediator, this time between French theory and English-speaking critics. Circumstances now are rather different than in 1965, of course: more English-speaking readers have access to French texts than French readers did to Russian texts, and in any case there has been considerable translation of French texts into English.